



National
Foreign
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CIAPA

LAR 81-012

Latin America Review (U)

3 August 1981

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PA LAR 81-012
3 August 1981

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Prime Minister Seaga believes that extreme leftists are using bank robberies to finance labor strife and criminal activities that would deter foreign investment and tourism, thereby undermining his economic recovery program.

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~~SECRET~~JAMAICA: GOVERNMENT FEARS ECONOMIC SABOTAGE (U)

Prime Minister Seaga has publicly accused local Communists of being behind a recent spate of sensational bank robberies. He probably hopes primarily to expose and intimidate the left and forestall a campaign of economic sabotage. Security forces already are severely taxed and may have some difficulty coping with additional violence, while continued strike activity would further undermine Seaga's faltering economic recovery program.

On 16 July, a well-disciplined group of gunmen kidnaped an accountant who worked at the University of West Indies Bank and drove her to the bank, where they forced her to open the vault and then seized some \$281,000 that had just been delivered. Police suspect that the Jamaican Communist Worker's Party and its affiliate--the University and Allied Workers' Union--were responsible

Moreover, the theft coincided with the arrival of the Rockefeller Committee to discuss foreign investment opportunities in Jamaica.

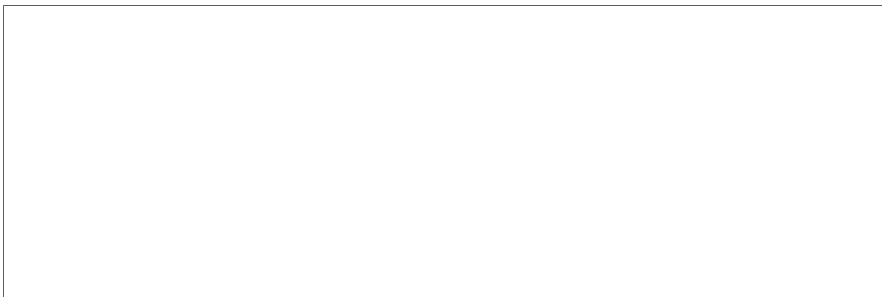
Since Seaga's election last October, there have been five other bank robberies

leftist extremists were behind several recent holdups at prominent tourist hotels as well as some arson attacks and threats against small businessmen and shopkeepers. Seaga fears the money will be used to call unnecessary strikes and to finance leftist political activities and economic sabotage. Vitally needed foreign investment and tourism also would be adversely affected by a surge in criminal activity and labor strife.

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Cuba has sought to maintain good relations with the Seaga government, but it would not be out of character for Havana to follow a dual strategy. [redacted]

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[redacted] Seaga probably would not seek an open confrontation on this issue, but he might surface allegations of Cuban complicity in order to embarrass the leftist opposition and keep Havana on the defensive. [redacted]

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[redacted] several recent strikes involving public-service workers and a threatened strike in the critical bauxite industry were politically motivated, and that leftist pressure for such strike activity may increase. In most cases, rank-and-file support was lacking--workers usually lost wages and gained few concessions. New strike calls probably would also receive little backing unless the workers came to believe that Seaga had made concessions to other groups that were substantially better than their own agreements. [redacted]

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[redacted] continued labor problems are not likely to pose an immediate threat to the government, which still enjoys strong popular support. [redacted]

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Continued leftist-inspired violence, however, could pose difficulties for Seaga. Joint military and police patrols have been instituted in parts of downtown Kingston to deter further arson attacks, and special bank patrols--which proved effective following a rash of bank robberies in 1976--may be formed. [redacted]

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